

Marge--Here is the excerpted section of "Games..."

for inclusion in your section on women & th Bible.

Hope it has arrived in time. I still haven't called.

Nancy. I assume that once it is typed and we know the

number of pages we can figure out how many we can afford to print (at least 200, I say) and then figure out how to get the money together. About \$50 could come from my end (from friends, etc.) and seems to me we should expect the district to at least come up with \$100, esp. if the bill can be paid off monthly, etc. Work w/ Nancy directly on all of this.

Love,

-a cover design, etc, Jean?

Jennie

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Love,

use portions marked in red.

2pp

Shall

GAMES BIBLE TRANSLATORS PLAY (excerpts)

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Male Bible translators have falsified the Word of God. Whether they have done so deliberately, or erred through prejudice, the effect has been to keep women in their place.

When noted feminist Lucy Stone was a child, her mother told her that Eve had placed a curse on all women. This is why their lives were meant to be restricted and hard. Lucy was told that the Bible repeatedly dictated women's lowly status. She resolved to study Hebrew, Latin and Greek to find out if this was so. Perhaps the translators, who were men, had made a mistake.

The same thought occurred to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, more than half a century later. She organized a committee of women scholars who reviewed certain sections of the Bible, spotlighting inaccuracies in translation and interpretation, where the status of their sex was concerned. Their "Woman's Bible" was published in 1898.

In 1924, missionary doctor Katharine Bushnell published "God's Word to Women", a brilliant and devastating indictment of the games that Bible translators play.

These games have fooled many people for a long time, and still provide the rationale for denying the spiritual equality of the sexes. As a result, the church is often outside the will of God and at war with heaven. It is, therefore, with a sense of urgency, that I share with you my research into mistranslations of scripture. If women determine to do so, we can right these wrongs.

MONOPOLY

One way in which men have cornered the religion market for themselves is the substitution of masculine nouns and pronouns for the nouns and pronouns of common gender in the original Greek. Thus, we read that Jesus gives us power to become "sons of God" (John 1:12, I John 3:1 KJV), whereas the Greek clearly states "children of God." In many instances, "no man" and "any man" are used instead of "no one" and "any one", all conspiring to give women that left-out feeling. The King James Version is especially at fault in this kind of ecclesiastical cartel-building. Three examples are found in John 1:18, Col. 2:16 and I Cor. 3:14, not to mention I Tim. 3:1, "If a man aspires to the office of bishop..." instead of "If any one aspires...", and I Tim. 3:15, "If a man knows not how to rule his own house..." instead of "If any one knows not..."

The word "brethren" is often used in the New Testament- one of those monopolistic words that seems to exclude women. Whenever the word "brethren" appears, we have a right to read "brethren and sisters," for in the Greek language the words for brother and sister are similar except for the word endings. There is evidence in ancient literature and in first century papyrus letters that "brothers" can specifically refer to a brother and a sister. In passages as Eph. 6:23, "brethren" includes believers of both sexes. . . .

A high-handed variation of the game of MONOPOLY is played by changing feminine people to masculine. Both the Revised Standard Version and the New English Bible identify the men and women who prophesied on Pentecost as "these men"; even though the word "men" does not appear in the Greek. To heap insult upon insult, they lump Junia, a gal, with Andronicus, a guy, as "men of note among the apostles" (Rom. 16:7), a glaring inaccuracy not supported by the Greek text. Junia was a common enough feminine name in Roman genealogies, but as far as we know there was no masculine equivalent of the name. Chrysostom takes it as feminine, remarking on the honor given this woman. . . .

Nympha, of Col. 4:15, is the victim of much confusion over her sex identity. The KJV alludes to the church in his house; the RSV to the church in her house. The Greek manuscripts are split on this question. It is likely that "her" was changed to "his" by some male chauvinist who lived long ago.

Elohim, one of the main words for God in the Old Testament, is a feminine plural. It is the plural of Elah, a feminine God. It is not the plural of El, a masculine God. However, in this case a masculine word ending (-im) is used, so that etymologically speaking, God is both male and female. Needless to say, Elohim is always translated "He."

An interesting point to remember is that the Hebrew words for "he" and "she" consist of two identical consonants, and differ only in the addition of vowel letters, later on. Thus, in the original manuscript, there is no way to differentiate except in context.

The Holy Spirit is one of those feminine persons translated "He" in the New Testament. The Hebrew word for spirit is feminine, but the Greek word for spirit is neuter. With masculine logic, it is translated "He." The concept of the Holy Spirit is derived in part from the personification of Wisdom in apocryphal books Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom of Solomon. In these writings, Wisdom, a "she", is the holy spirit that unites the soul with God. The Holy Spirit was "she" to the early Christians, in apocryphal writings such as the Odes of Solomon and the Gospel according to the Hebrews; and in the Syrian Didascalia. A footnote stating the femininity of the Holy Spirit is little enough to ask. Bible publishers, please copy.

Women aren't always transformed into men, under the magic pen of male Bible translators. No, indeed. Sometimes they become persons of common gender. In Psalm 68:11, those who speak the word of the Lord are described as a "great host." Well, I would sooner describe them as a "great hostess." The Hebrew word is feminine. The reference to women in the following verse (Ps. 68:12) backs this up.

In Isaiah 40:9 we meet the very same word, and again it loses its feminine identity. No wonder. Our "herald" of good tidings is really a girl. At least one commentator suggests that Is. 40:9 be translated: "O daughter that bringest good tidings...lift up your voice...say...Behold your God." Not a bad idea. Let's recommend it.

STRATEGY is another game that Bible translators play. Paul was trying to tell us that "God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33), when along came a Bible translator. By a skillful feat of legerdemain, he took the phrase "as in all the churches of the saints", and separated it from verse 33, placing it in front of verse 34, to make it appear that it was the custom in all the churches for women to be silent: "As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches..." (v. 35, notice the awkwardness of the sentence). Moreover, verses 34 and 35, enjoining the silence of women, were no part of the original text. They interrupt the train of thought of the whole 14th chapter, which regulates the expression (not suppression) of spiritual gifts. In a dozen ancient manuscripts, they appear after v. 40, instead of after v. 33, their itinerant nature making them highly suspect. Their insertion into scripture is all part of the game of STRATEGY. They belong in footnotes or out.

In I Tim. 2:8,9, women are told to be modestly attired while men pray and, by implication, women remain silent. Well, these verses contain bad grammar as well as bad theology. In verse 9, there is no proper verb, since "to dress" (kosmein) is an infinitive. Verses 8 and 9 cannot and should be punctuated: "I desire the men should pray...; likewise the women, I desire women to dress modestly..." I Tim. 2:11-15, forbidding women to speak or to teach, should be dropped to footnotes, as a later interpolation that is no way the edict of Paul or the custom of the early church, wherein Priscilla was the teacher of Apollos, and women were leaders of house churches.

SKETCHSHOOTING. Phoebe, a leader of the early church, was an easy target. Paul said she was a "diakonos" (Rom. 16:1), a word that is nearly always translated "minister". Then he called her "prostatis" (Rom. 16:2), meaning "ruler" (Prostatis is a noun of the verb proistemi meaning to rule), or "guardian" in the sense of being a spiritual leader (first century church father Clement of Rome applies the masculine form of the word to Christ, "the guardian of our souls.") A woman minister? A woman ruler? Fat chance. Phoebe will soon be shot down from her lofty status. First, "minister" will be changed to "servant" (KJV), the only time diakonos is translated "servant" in all of the New Testament. Or, if you read the RSV, she's now a "deaconess", even though there were no deaconesses in N. T. times, when both men and women held the office of deacon. Greek has a separate word for deaconess. It isn't mentioned in the Bible. As for Phoebe being a ruler, forget it. The same word is now translated

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"succourer" (KJV) and "helper" (RSV). Say, fellows, why not state what's really on your minds, and just call her a flunky? ... use

Next, two games in one: CAREERS and TROUBLE. It boggles the mind to think that women have been victimized for centuries by a portion of scripture that has been incorrectly translated. Even after all these years, women are still being nailed by Genesis 3:16. When evangelist Billy Graham wrote "Jesus and the Liberated Woman" in the Dec., '70 Ladies Home Journal, he trotted out Gen. 3:16:

Eve's biological role was to bear children-'in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children' (Game of TROUBLE). Her romantic role was to love her husband-'Thy desire shall be to thy husband'. Her vocational role was to be second in command-'And he shall rule over thee' (Game of CAREERS).

I wonder what Billy Graham would say if he knew that Gen. 3:16 is a flagrant mistranslation from the original Hebrew. The first part of verse 16 is usually translated "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception." Now, when the Hebrew text was first written, only consonants were used. Vowel letters and vowel marks came in later. The same consonants for "I will greatly multiply" can just as well be translated "A snare hath increased...", making the serpent, and not God, the author of Eve's troubles. Furthermore, the Hebrew word translated "conception", (KJV) or "childbearing" (RSV) is two letters short of being the 5-letter word for conception. One missing letter is a consonant of the root and therefore not dispensable. Some Old Testament authorities actually admit it is an error or an abbreviation. The word "desire" connoting lust is an error in translation introduced in the 16th century by a male chauvinist monk named Pagnino. And Adam was no way commanded to rule over Eve: the simple future, and not the imperative is given in the Hebrew text. Katharine Bushnell gets credit for giving us the real Gen. 3:16:

A snare hath increased thy sorrow and thy sighing-
In sorrow thou will bring forth children (a prediction, not
a punishment)
Thou art turning away (that is, from God) to thy husband
And he will rule over you (a prediction, not a command).

The Greek Septuagint, part of which dates back to the 3rd century B.C., supports "sighing", not "conception"; it supports "turning", not "desire", as do most ancient versions of the Old Testament; and it supports the simple future prediction "will rule" over the phony imperative "shall rule" of our English translations. Gen. 3:16 means the opposite of what Billy Graham thinks it means; Eve was really being warned against giving her husband too much authority. She had disobeyed God; and as long as she preferred to obey her husband, her life would be filled with unhappiness. This state of affairs was not at all pleasing to God, who knew that Eve was led astray by a fast-talking serpent. In Gen. 3:16, we are confronted with a woman who turns away from God because her judgment is clouded by the Feminine Mystique.

A children's game that Bible translators adapt for their own purpose is EYE GUESS (choosing a word that downgrades women when other English words are equally good translations). A classic example is Isaiah 3:12: "My people - children are their oppressors, and women rule over them." (Oh horrors) The Hebrew consonants for "women" are the same as for "usurers". A slight vowel mark under one consonant differentiates "women". (Remember-vowel signs are a later addition to the Hebrew text.) The Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, properly translates "extortioners" (Greek: apaitountes). Once the translator opted for "women", he had to lend credibility to his guess by bringing the first part of the sentence into line. With supreme oblivion to its meaning, he rendered the Hebrew word עֲצֵר as "children", to correspond with "women". This word occurs in the Bible 21 times; nowhere else is it translated "children". In Ex. 5:6 and elsewhere it is "taskmaster". It also means "gleaner" or "exactor", as in the Septuagint (Greek: praktores). I am simply awed at the inventiveness of men who change tax-collectors into children. Is. 3:12 should read something like this:

My people - tax-collectors oppress them, and
usurers rule over them.

In Isaiah 3:14, 15 the theme of economic oppression is continued with reference to rulers of the people who are masculine, not feminine, forsooth.

KERPLUNK, in case you don't know, is a trap-door type of children's game. For example, in a single New Testament manuscript, "D", the phrase "and a woman by the name of Damaris" is deleted from Acts 17:34, when she and Dionysius, who must have been distinguished citizens, are mentioned by name, along with other unnamed converts of Paul. Damaris was restored to personhood, but we perceive that the editor of manuscript D knew how to play the game of KERPLUNK. Two portions of scripture that portray the feminist outlook of Jesus barely survive the disappearance treatment. One is the case of the woman accused of adultery (John 7:53-8:11), and the other is the resurrection appearance of Jesus to a woman first, and Mary's proclamation of the Easter message (Mark 16:9-20). Both these passages have been relegated to footnotes, Kerplunk, in the Revised Standard Version, because of their omission from some New Testament manuscripts (Kerplunk?)

Considering the anti-woman bias of ancient and medieval theologians of the Western world, it was inevitable that men would tamper with scripture. Their Eastern counterparts played the same games. In the Hindu practice of widow-burning, the flames were fanned by a wilful mistranslation of the Rig-Veda. During part of the Hindu funeral ceremony, certain women were to proceed to the altar first. By changing the word "agra" meaning "first" to "agneh" meaning "of fire", the whole sense of the passage was altered, and widows were psyched into believing that they were supposed to go into the fire. Women were brainwashed into accepting their glorious destiny. Reluctance was met with disapproval and ostracism, and resistance was met with force. No doubt, scripture was quoted.

It was just as inevitable that women would begin to suspect that something was wrong, as Lucy Stone in 1830 questioned the scrupulousness of men who translated the Bible, and refused to bow down to her glorious destiny as a drudge. Once women learned to read the Bible in their own language, it was only a matter of time before they would investigate scripture in the original languages. We are grateful to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her Revising Committee, and to scholar Katharine Bushnell. These women of the past, who witnessed for truth, are part of the feminist movement. We can finish their work. We can get the job done.

Sisters: pass it on! Let's tell it up and down the land. We are calling the games that Bible translators play. Write to the publishers listed below, and pledge your support for a revised Bible. Tell them we want Phoebe taken out of the typing pool and restored to her rightful place as a pastor and evangelist. Tell them we want Gen. 3:16, and other portions of scripture that affect our status and destiny, to be translated accurately and fairly. It's not too soon to correct the mistakes of the past, but God help us if it is too late.

Publishers

Abingdon Press, 201 Eighth Ave. South. Nashville, Tenn. 37203
Emory S. Bucke, Senior Editor.

Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63118.

Thomas Nelson & Sons, Copewood and Davis Sts., Camden, N.J. 08103.
Edwin B. Chatfield, Editor.

Zondervan Publishing House, 1415 Lake Dr., S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506.
T. Alton Bryant, Editor.

Available from Ruth Hoppin, 15 Portola Ave., Daly City, Calif. 94015:
Priscilla: Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews and other essays at special price of \$4.50 postpaid; "Pope Joan: The Female Pope", article reprint from Everywoman, 25¢ plus stamped envelope.

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OVERCOMING

THE BIBLICAL AND TRADITIONAL SUBORDINATION OF WOMEN

BY ANNE MCGREW BENNETT

This statement was presented at a class on Foundations and Methods of Christian Ethics, Pacific School of Religion, 1973.

All this century Protestantism has been stirred and inspired by the great leaders of the Social Gospel. There have been similar influences in Catholicism. This century has been one of many struggles, and some successes, for a measure of social justice: the eight-hour day; the right of labor to organize; massive legislation establishing social security, welfare rights, civil rights, human rights.

One of the strange characteristics of this movement for justice is that women, for the most part, have not been included or if included have been relegated to an inferior status. As an example of this exclusion, household workers (i.e., women) will be included, for the first time, under the protection of the minimum wage in California beginning March 4, 1974.

John Kenneth Galbraith, in his new book, *Economics and the Public Purpose*, states that

the modern economy . . . requires for its success a crypto-servant class . . . The conversion of [housewives] into a crypto-servant class [Galbraith here is speaking of middle-class and upper-middle-class housewives] was an economic accomplishment of the first importance . . . The servant role of woman is critical for the expansion of consumption in the modern economy. That it is so generally approved . . . is a formidable tribute to the power of the convenient social virtue.¹

Betty and Theodore Roszak in *Masculine/Feminine* write of

. . . the invidious use of sexual stereotyping over the last century . . . the truth is that women are members of a caste, socially dispersed by the family system, but collectively victimized by a lifelong process of sexual stereotyping contrived to make the world safe for male supremacy.

The church and seminaries are still largely blind to the way that woman is thought of as "not-quite-human"² and blind to the depth of their patriarchal structure and sexist theology.

Women, since about 1970, have been entering seminaries in large numbers. Women are now ordained in all but four major communions in the United States (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Missouri Synod Lutheran, Episcopal) and those communions are hard pressed to maintain their discrimination. However, the deep issues are not getting attention — perhaps they are not comprehended, obviously they are fearsome.

An example of this blindness is the symbol which was used on the name tags and programs of the 1973 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Chicago. The symbol was two white male hands firmly clasped under the words "The Annual Meeting." I wonder sometimes if the choice of this symbol was due to blindness or if it was a flaunting of male power saying to the few women who were there, "This is a male club, women are outsiders." There are many powerful forms of communication and control and exclusion.

In a study of anti-Semitism in contemporary America, *The Tenacity of Prejudice*, there is a section about social club discrimination against Jews by the college educated. If one substitutes "professional societies" for "social club" and "women" for "Jews," the far-reaching power of male-clergy associations, male theological societies, etc., in supporting sexism comes into clear focus:

The educated are the guardians of the ideal values of our society. They constitute a cultural elite whose responsibility is to form and maintain standards of belief and behavior . . . tending to define for others what is respectable in the realm of belief and permissible in the realm of conduct . . . freedom of personal association is a democratic right. But in a society pervaded by ethnic and racial ["sexist"]

prejudice this ... has less than innocent consequences ... social club ["professional societies"] discrimination helps to create and maintain the image of Jews ["women"] as socially ["professionally"] undesirable and to cast the Jew ["woman"] into the role of the outsider. It reduces the moral authority of the educated to speak out against prejudice, and it implicitly legitimates the virulent expressions of anti-Semitism ["sexism"] that the educated disavow for themselves. However unprejudiced they may be, the college educated who support social ["professional society"] discrimination condone one of the historic institutions of prejudice.⁴

In an ordination service for a woman which I attended recently, the official church representatives were men; the nouns and pronouns of the modern gospel songs were heavily masculine; when the prayer of Invocation began with the words "Mother-Father-God" there was an audible titter; in a charge to the soon-to-be-ordained woman that she give a central place to a prophetic ministry all the prophets, ancient and modern, who were held up as role models were men; the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith was read in unison — it is a short statement, but God is referred to in masculine pronouns twenty-one times; and, of course, humankind is referred to as "man," "men," "him" without comparable feminine words.

Why is it so easy, so "natural," to treat women as "other" — an "other" to exploit, or enjoy, or ignore with impunity?

Western culture, which is the dominant world culture today, has been largely molded by the Judeo-Christian faith. Therefore we must examine the religious myths and symbols and history which are the very fabric of our theology, of our worship and of our common life in order to begin to understand the root causes of discrimination which have given woman a certain "place" based on sex.

The most superficial examination of the Scriptures reveals that it comes out of a male-dominated society. Dr. Phyllis Trible, professor of Old Testament at Andover Newton Seminary, describes biblical religion in these words:

It is superfluous to document patriarchy in Scripture. Yahweh is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as well as of Jesus and Paul. The legal codes of Israel treat women primarily as chattel. Qoheleth condemns her "whose heart is snares and nets and whose hands are fetters," concluding that although a few men may seek the meaning of existence, "a woman among all those I have not found." ... Paul considers women subordinate to their husbands, and, even worse, 1 Timothy makes woman responsible for sin in the world. Considerable evidence indicts the Bible as a document of male supremacy. Attempts to acquit it by tokens such as Deborah, Huldah, Ruth, or Mary and Martha only reinforce the case.⁵

If these statements are all, or the essence, of what biblical religion means then women are in a very bad situation and have little hope of claiming whole personhood as long as the Judeo-Christian faith molds our understanding of God/man/woman.

There is another approach to the Bible. The Bible and biblical tradition can be re-read keeping in mind the patriarchal bias of the writers and redactors and interpreters in an effort to understand our biblical faith without sexist blinders.

Begin with the myth of the creation of humankind: "So God created man in his own image: in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Gen. 1:27) This verse has been interpreted quite differently for man than for woman. There is no question in the minds of men who follow the Judeo-Christian faith but that they are created in God's image with all the dignity and power that that means. As for women, it has been widely taught and believed that because they are not male they are an inferior creation.

Re-read the myth. Begin with the previous verse: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image and likeness.' ..." (1:26) Notice that in this passage the writer does not have God say "Let us make man in my image," but "in our image." The Hebrew word for God in these passages is not *Yahweh* or *El*, which are masculine, singular nouns used to refer to God. The Hebrew word is *Elohim*. It is a plural word which is used in the Bible for a female or male God or Gods. The goddess of the Sidonians is referred to in the Bible as *Elohim*. It is always translated masculine, singular.⁶

Scholars — most of them male, of course — have a great deal of trouble with this word. Some of them try to ignore the plural and dismiss it as the plural of majesty. However, the late Old Testament scholar and Dean of Christ Church Oxford, Cuthbert A. Simpson, who is the exegete in *The Interpreter's Bible* for these particular passages in the creation story in which *Elohim* is used, suggests that there is "here an attempt ... to give expression to the feeling that God could not be adequately represented as just a bare unity."⁷

There is another problem for us in this passage as we think about woman because of the use of the word "man": "God created man." The word "man" can be used in the generic sense and include woman. It is so used here. The Hebrew word in this passage is a generic term, not a male term.⁸ It should be translated "persons" or "humankind," not "man," which may mean "male" and always carries a male image.

How much difference would there be in our understanding of man/woman, woman's "place," if in the creation story the word *Elohim* were used throughout for the word "God" and the referent masculine pronouns; and if the generic term "persons" were used instead of "man"?

Elohim said, "Let us create persons in our image and likeness. ..."

Elohim created persons in Elohim's own image; male and female Elohim created them.

(Gen. 1:26, 27)

This most ancient myth, in profound symbolism, describes God as inclusive being and all persons made in God's image. God's attributes are not limited and there are no inferior persons. Woman is portrayed the same as man. Both are

persons; sex is secondary.

The second chapter of Genesis contains another creation myth. According to the usual interpretation of this story, woman was made after man to be a helper for him. It is best not to be too literal in interpreting myths; but it cannot be maintained that woman is inferior even if she was created after man without admitting that man is inferior to the creeping things because he was created after them. Neither man nor woman in this story is said to be made "in God's image." Furthermore, the word translated as "help meet" or "helper" is the Hebrew word used of divine, or superior, help. The word never refers to inferior help in the Bible.

Probably the story, myth, most often quoted to justify keeping woman inferior, to man is the story of the Fall when Eve (whose name, by the way, means "Life," or "Mother of all living") and Adam are still in the Garden of Eden. They have eaten of the forbidden fruit and God says to Eve, according to the modern translators of this story:

"I will increase your labour and your groaning, and in labour you shall bear children. You shall be eager for your husband, and he shall be your master." (Gen. 3:16)

The commentaries by the scholars on this passage are most interesting and very different from the common interpretation. Dean Simpson writes: "Most significant is the fact that [the writer] far in advance of his time sees that this domination of woman by man is an evil thing. The implication is that the relationship between husband and wife was intended by God to be a mutual and complementary relationship of love and respect, not a relationship in which one dominated the other."⁹

Professor Tribble writes: "This statement is not license for male supremacy, but rather it is condemnation of that very pattern."¹⁰

A literal translation of this passage from the Septuagint reads quite differently from our translations:

"Unto the woman [God] said, a snare hath increased thy sorrow and thy sighing; Thou art turning away [from God] to thy husband, and he will rule over thee."¹¹

In this translation it is very clear that woman is being warned against depending on her husband rather than on God.

Surely the scholars know that the translation in our Bible implies a false interpretation and that only a few people have access to their commentaries. Many an article and sermon has extolled "woman's place" as helper to her husband, not to mention statements justifying treating women as inferior persons and second-class citizens. I've never read an article or heard a sermon on the subject "Man is evil when he dominates woman," have you?

Half the human race, men, grow up with an exalted ego because God and humankind are always referred to by their identification, masculine pronouns, and woman is referred to as their "help meet." What violence these interpretations have done to both women and men.

Sometimes when I raise questions about the

interpretations of the old myths in the Bible or insist that women, as well as men, should be celebrated in liturgies, I am told: "Oh, don't bother with the past, let's get on with what needs to be done now." I want to explain why I think we must insist on re-reading and re-interpreting the myths and history without sexist blinders or there will be little real change for women. If an easily identifiable group within the culture is portrayed as inferior, as never having made any general contributions to society — that is, if their contributions are always thought of as within one very limited area (with women this would be within the biological sphere, giving birth and nurturing the family) — then that group of persons is thought of as "other" and the dominant group in the culture continues to hold them in an inferior, usually a servant, role. The oppressed group themselves accept the second-class, not-quite-human role because they know little or nothing about their past which would lead them to have any other opinion.

In the Judeo-Christian heritage the patriarchal culture has been so dominant, and still is, that women even though they have had a significant historical role are ignored, omitted, in history and the ritual celebrations. Thus their history is forgotten and without a past women are considered "other," not to be counted as full members of the community. A 20th century illustration of this is the way historians and social scientists continue to declare that Negroes got the vote after the Civil War and that all Americans have been equal under the law since the 14th Amendment became law in 1868. Black women as well as white women waited until 1920 to get the vote; and women are still trying to get the Equal Rights Amendment passed which will, at long last, include them.

The bias of scholars is very evident in the way they interpret biblical myths or history. As an example I quote from three Old Testament scholars writing about Adam and Eve eating the apple in the Garden of Eden.

First, comments from Dr. Gottfried Quell in a book entitled *Kittel's Bible Key Words*. Scholars in all parts of the world consider the articles in this book indispensable for a modern exposition of the truth of the Bible. In the section on Adam and Eve and their Fall, Dr. Quell describes the woman, Eve, as "naive," and says that she, Eve, is "already intrigued by the beauty of the forbidden fruit, listens like a fool to the words [of the serpent] about being clever, though she hardly understands them ... and commits the act of disobedience." Dr. Quell attributes Adam's disobedience to his "passionate longing, shown in a thousand ways, to get knowledge and be clever ...". Then, in a footnote, Dr. Quell quotes two other biblical scholars: one of whom suggests "the creation of woman may have been the result of a sin, i.e., an act of divine anger"; the other scholar calls the suggestion "fairly certain."¹²

Now, comments from Dr. Phyllis Tribble — try to remember that her comments are about the same people and the same story!

Why does the serpent speak to the woman and not to the man? ... the woman is more appealing ...

she is the more intelligent one . . . the one with greater sensibilities . . . She contemplates the tree, taking into account all the possibilities. The tree is good for food . . . Above all, it is coveted as the source of wisdom . . . The woman is fully aware when she acts, her vision encompassing the gamut of life. She takes the fruit and she eats. The initiative and the decision are hers alone. There is no consultation with her husband. She seeks neither his advice nor his permission. [Eve] acts independently. By contrast [Adam] is a silent, passive and bland recipient . . . [Adam] does not theologize, he does not contemplate; he does not envision the full possibilities of the occasion. His one act is belly-oriented . . . If the woman be intelligent, sensitive and ingenious, the man is passive, brutish, and inept . . .¹³

Finally, comments from J. Edgar Bruns, director of the Institute of Christian Thought at St. Michael's College, Toronto. In a study of ancient mythologies Professor Bruns finds one theme dominant: "the equation of woman with intelligence and civilization." "In the book of Genesis, Adam and Eve are forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a phrase that signifies all knowledge. The serpent . . . tells Eve that if she and Adam eat of the tree they will become as gods and that is why the Lord has forbidden them to partake of its fruit. Eve is tempted, to the point of yielding, but why? Because she sees that 'the tree was desirable for the purpose of knowing' . . . She is over-eager for wisdom and disobeys . . ."¹⁴

Re-read the story and make up your own mind which scholar is closest to the actual character portrayals in the story. Notice when you read it that Eve admitted her guilt, but that Adam blamed God for his act. Notice also that the first great promise to humankind is to Eve: "her brood" will strike the serpent's head.

Re-read the Old Testament and the New Testament; search for the references to women; keep in mind the statement of the British historian J. H. Plumb: "The past is always a created ideology with a purpose, designed to control individuals, or motivate societies, or inspire classes. Nothing has been so corruptly used as concepts of the past . . ." A past without women is a "created ideology."

Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel, whose husbands were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are most independent, fascinating women. Sarah's name means "ruler." We always hear about God's promise to Abraham — we are called the "children" of Abraham. Actually the promise of God was to Sarah. The promise was through Isaac, Sarah's son. Abraham already had a son. It is Sarah who is the Mother of nations. Even the name of the Jews, Israelites, comes not from Abraham but from Sarah. Her name has the same root as Israel.¹⁵ Abraham was Sarah's consort.

In an eight-volume work called *The Legends of the Jews*, a compilation of old Jewish traditions, there are many references to Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel. They are called the Matriarchs, the prophetesses, the Mothers. The *Legends* tell about the "cloud of light" representing God's presence which was over Sarah's tent and later over the tent of Rebekah; about the ceremonial gifts at the

dedication of the Tabernacle which honored the Mothers; there was no mention of any gifts honoring the Fathers. There is a listing of some twenty-two women called "women of valor" in the *Legends*.¹⁶

Re-read the Exodus story. Notice that it is the women who are the leaders in the revolution. It was the women who refused to obey the Pharaoh. The Hebrew midwives disobey. Pharaoh's own daughter and her maidens scheme with female slaves (Miriam and her mother) to adopt a Hebrew child whom she names Moses. If Pharaoh had realized the power of women he might have reversed his decree and had females killed rather than males. In the biblical story Miriam's role doesn't end when she was a young girl hiding her brother in the bulrushes. She was one of the leaders until her death. In the legends are stories that it was Miriam who taught the wandering Hebrews to dig for water, to till the ground, cultivate the tree; and that she restrained Moses from attacking and killing the people who lived in Canaan. Only after her death did the Hebrews make war against the tribes living in Canaan. Dr. Trible points out that the Exodus story teaches that liberation is a refusal of the oppressed to participate in an unjust society and that liberation begins in the home of the oppressor. She says: "... a patriarchal religion which creates and preserves such feminist traditions contains resources for overcoming patriarchy."¹⁷

Deborah, as reported in the Book of Judges, was a judge, chief of the tribes of Israel, commander in chief of the army, queen. But when you read the modern commentaries all of these roles are combined under the terms "a charismatic leader" or "prophetess." Why, in the 20th century, cannot the scholars report a woman's status as "head of state" correctly? Fortunately the story of Deborah has not been omitted from the Bible. It couldn't be, for the Song of Deborah is one of the oldest and most prized literary treasures of the Hebrew people.¹⁸

Huldah is another of our ancestors to celebrate. Huldah is the woman who was consulted when King Josiah heard about a book that had been found in the Temple and ordered the high priest to seek guidance from the Lord about the book's validity. In the biblical account, 2 Kings 22:11-14, the high priest and four high government officials went to Huldah the prophetess and consulted her. It is no wonder that most readers of the account pay little attention to her; she is identified as "... the wife of Shallum [who is] the son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, the keeper of the wardrobe." And they consulted her "at home in the second quarter of Jerusalem." It is interesting to read in the *Legends* that she was the head of an academy in Jerusalem.¹⁹

The extreme male-centeredness of biblical writers, especially editors, is shown in the hundreds of incidents throughout the Hebrew Bible in which feminine words have been changed to masculine in order to express reverence for the Holy. Feminine words referring to sacred objects or having to do with worship have been changed to masculine. For example, the golden dishes on the altar, the bread, curtains, rings, doorposts,

candlesticks are feminine words but they have been changed to masculine. Even the milk cows that brought back the Ark are referred to as masculine six times! As one research scholar writes: "We may formulate the following principle: whenever someone or something attained an unusual or elevated status, whether temporary or permanent, the Scribes used masculine ... suffixes with reference to feminine words."²⁰

However, the Hebrew people never limited God's attributes to the masculine. There are many passages in the Old Testament which liken Yahweh's relationship to Israel as that of a mother caring for her children. More specifically God is described as being known and working in the world through *Shekinah*, which means the presence of God among the people, for example, in the cloud of light, burning bush, and in the Temple. God was in heaven, but *Shekinah* was God's presence on earth, according to the Jews. The word *Shekinah* is feminine gender. God is known through *Torah*, which means the guidance of God. The books of the law are *Torah*, but *Torah* is much more — *Torah* is the powerful "word" of God. This word is also of feminine gender. God is known and works through *Chokmah*, which means wisdom. Wisdom was thought of as pre-cosmic, involved in creation along with *Torah*. *Chokmah*, too, is a feminine word. These Hebrew words — *Shekinah*, *Torah*, *Cokmah* — reflecting the feminine attributes of God have never been changed into masculine gender, although biblical scholars will often use the pronoun "he" or "it" with them.²¹

Re-read the Gospels and examine the record of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Observe that Jesus nowhere distinguishes between men and women as children of God. On the contrary, he said and did things which indicated that he thought of women as the equal of men. In the male-centered Jewish world of his time, this was indeed revolutionary. The Gospels are filled with concrete examples of Jesus' feminist position — teaching women the meaning of the Scriptures, including women in the group who went with him through towns and villages preaching the Good News, using the experiences of both women and men in the parables.²²

The role of women in the church of early Christian times has become hidden history. Joan Morris, an English historian, has just published a book entitled *The Lady Was a Bishop* which documents the fact that women in the early church "held a place in the hierarchical service of the Church that is now denied to them." They were ordained with episcopal jurisdiction. Women were abbesses independent of bishops and monarchs. One abbess in the fourth century had jurisdiction over as many as thirty towns where she supervised the clergy who vowed obedience to her. From the 7th century until the Reformation there were twice as many nuns as monks. The Church Council in the 8th century was called by a woman, Empress Irene. Margaret of Scotland in the 11th century not only called a Synod but was the chief speaker.²³

The Reformation returned to a Hebrew and Old Testament evaluation of women which al-

lowed woman a position in the home but in subservience to her husband. In the witch craze of the 16th and 17th centuries women were the chief victims. The Protestant churches which were born in this era still bear scars of its anti-feminine sentiments. Neither Luther nor Calvin had a place for women as responsible religious colleagues.²⁴

I've emphasized the biblical heritage, especially the Old Testament, and church history because it is this heritage — the heavily male-dominated thought and structure — which still largely influences our language, images, thought patterns, our understanding of sexuality and personhood, our common life. Scientific knowledge, economic and political systems have changed, but we are a patriarchal culture now as then. This patriarchal culture, from primitive times to the present, has so manipulated religion as to provide a rationale, in the name of religion, for holding women in an inferior, submissive place. If religious sanction is given for holding down those you love, and who love you, is it any wonder that there are no limits to rationalizing violence toward, and exploitation of others?

Women's liberation involves every facet of life and meaning. If — no, *when* it is admitted that over half of humankind, women, are considered and treated as not-quite-human and we look into the abyss which has resulted from our denial of God and creation, a long step will have been taken toward restoring wholeness to our understanding of God and persons, and full humanity to both oppressor and oppressed.

What is the role of the church and seminaries, and especially those persons in the field of Christian ethics, to expose the distortions of myth and history, to be advocate for fact and truth in the interpretation of history and myth, and to be activists in the struggle for whole personhood for all?

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Evangelicalism: A Feminist Perspective

Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

At the outset I want to make clear that what I have to say about evangelicalism will reflect my own angle of vision. My attitudes do not necessarily reflect the views of the Evangelical Women's Caucus or any other organization. An estimated fifty million evangelicals live in the United States, but they come in every political persuasion and a variety of lifestyles. Even within evangelical feminism, there is no party line. I will try to be accurate, but I can speak only for myself.

I define evangelicalism as a mind-set emphasizing biblical authority and personal conversion through faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. I define feminism as willingness to implement the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes. Like all the evangelical feminists I know, I am just as concerned with furthering the best interests of men and boys as of women and girls. I view the hierarchical concept of dominance and submission, even when softened to male "headship" and female "supportive role," as an unbiblical and anti-Christian concept. I regard the idea that one category of persons must submit to the authority of another category as the root concept not only of sexism but of racism, economic exploitation, and imperialism. Children who grow up in homes where the mother is expected to be everybody's servant in a one-way submission to male supremacy become *accustomed* to oppression. And people accustomed to oppression tend to assume that it is inevitable for some people to lose so that others can win. For that reason, I believe sexism is the most pervasive and profound expression of the egocentric nature that is hostile to genuine godliness.

The evangelical or biblical feminist movement centers in the Evangelical Women's Caucus, which emerged as the most visible result thus far of the 1973 Chicago "Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern." The declaration included the following statement: "We acknowledge that we have encouraged men to prideful domination and women to irresponsible passivity. So we call both men and women to mutual submission and active discipleship." In November of 1975 a Washington conference of the Evangelical Women's Caucus attracted about four hundred people from Canada and thirty-six of these United States. More than eighteen religious denominations were represented. The conference, organized by Judy Brown Hull of New York's Broadway Presbyterian Church, Cheryl Forbes of *Christianity Today*, Karin Granberg Michaelson of Wesley Theological Seminary, and Heidi Frost of *Faith at Work*, focused on understanding the

Bible's message concerning male and female personhood and on the practical outworkings of that message. There were some twenty-five workshops exploring topics as diverse as "C. S. Lewis and Feminism," "Body Awareness," "Third World Women," "Singleness," "Women in the Ministry," and "Motherhood." Only two political resolutions were passed at the conference: an affirmation of solidarity with Roman Catholics who were meeting that same weekend to further women's ordination, and a pledge to support and work for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. The ongoing work of the Women's Caucus, including the founding of local chapters, was entrusted to a steering committee under the direction of Evon Bachaus.

Despite the relative conservatism and the Bible-centered spirit of the Washington conference, certain evangelicals reacted to it with considerable fear. Shortly thereafter, *Christianity Today* printed an editorial linking masculine God-language with belief in biblical inerrancy, accusing feminists of wanting to call Jesus God's daughter rather than God's son, and emphasizing the vital importance of Jesus' incarnation as a male. Elisabeth Elliot Leitch, who reported on the conference in an extremely conservative evangelical quarterly, offered her opinion that "Mutual submission (God knew when He set up His hierarchy) will not work . . . Men and women must be awakened to the call of God-husbands . . . to be the head as Christ is Head over His body, to exercise authority in Church and Home; wives to submit, to reverence their husbands (remembering that authority is not earned by infallibility or perfect holiness but is bestowed)."¹

Dozens of books from evangelical publishing houses take a similarly traditional position concerning male-female relationships. Among the most influential are the runaway best seller by Marabel Morgan, *The Total Woman*; and Larry Christenson's *The Christian Family*, which has been highly recommended by Dr. and Mrs. Billy Graham. Such books place the responsibility for the success or failure of Christian marriage squarely on the shoulders of the wife, who must be the one to make all the psychological adjustments and personal sacrifices. Some of these books make their point with horrifying inhumanity: the wife must decrease so that her husband may increase.

Evangelical feminists, on the other hand, contend that such attitudes raise the male to the level of an absolute norm, an idol, and enslave the female in self-destructive idolatry. Feminists point out that biblical remarks concerning husbandly "love" and wifely "submission" always occur in the context of the mutual submission of every Christian to every other Christian, and therefore that love and submission are to be seen as synonyms rather than as mutually exclusive categories. Traditionalists seem willing to argue that husbandly love excludes submission, but they are not willing to argue that wifely submission excludes love. This is only one instance of the inconsistent selectivity that seems to prevail in traditionalist circles.

The Biblical Approach of Evangelical Feminists

The genesis of twentieth-century evangelical feminist theory was an excellent book by Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty called *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation*.² The impetus of that book has been maintained by *Daughters of Sarah*, an evangelical feminist newsletter that has kept people in touch with each other and with the issues. Interestingly enough,

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the title *Daughters of Sarah* is typical of the methods of biblical feminism. Whereas traditionalists think of Sarah only as the woman who "obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (1 Pet. 3:6), evangelical feminists have looked into the life of Sarah more fully and have become aware that Sarah was a powerful partner to Abraham, that in Gen. 21:12 God told Abraham to obey his wife concerning the expulsion of Ishmael ("whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you"), and that she was a woman for whom God "made laughter" (Gen. 21:6-7). Biblical feminists are pleased to think of themselves as her daughters. While we would not argue on the basis of Gen. 21:12 that Christian husbands ought always to obey their wives, we do not accept traditionalist arguments on the basis of 1 Pet. 3:6 that Christian wives ought always to obey their husbands. The context of 1 Pet. 3:6 is the mutual submission of all Christians to each other according to Christ's example (1 Pet. 2:21; 3:7-9); and 1 Pet. 3:1-6 is specifically addressed to newly converted wives whose husbands were as yet unconverted and accustomed to the patriarchal customs of the first century.

Thus, instead of snorting at the very mention of Sarah and regarding her story as oppressive, evangelical feminists honor her as one of our foremothers. Some Christian feminists, such as the Catholic liberationist Rosemary Ruether, are content to view the biblical "stories of the creation and the fall as themselves a part of the fall, as themselves expressions of male ideology justifying false power."³ But evangelical feminists contend that, when rightly understood, biblical creation and fall stories support the concept that God's ideal is a just and egalitarian society. Whereas Catholic theologians tend to urge that feminists must push the Judeo-Christian tradition *beyond its own limits*, the post-Christian theologian Mary Daly urges that we castrate God the Father and create entirely new myths. Meanwhile, evangelical traditionalists applaud the Bible as a handbook of hierarchy. Evangelical feminists insist, however, that the real hope for humanity lies not in discarding the Bible but in coming to a more profound understanding and implementation of it.

Jewett's Man as Male and Female: A Watershed

If *All We're Meant to Be* was the genesis of evangelical feminist theory, Paul King Jewett's *Man as Male and Female* is its watershed. When I first met Jewett several years before the publication of that book, I was astounded to find an evangelical theologian who would agree that Genesis contains several different creation accounts. I was equally astounded to find an evangelical male theologian who would admit that it is nonsense to insist on female subordination while simultaneously insisting that such subordination does not imply inferiority. I was astounded because up to that time I had heard so much evangelical double talk about woman's being spiritually equal but subordinate in role--the same sort of separate-but-equal double talk that has been featured in racist rationalizations for so many decades.

Professor Jewett, who is not given to double talk, pointed out in *Man as Male and Female* that all the Pauline texts supporting female subordination appeal to the second creation narrative, never to the first--and what's more, that all of them assume "the traditional rabbinic understanding of that narrative whereby the order of their creation is made to yield the primacy of the man over the woman."⁴ Since my own studies had led me to similar conclusions, at the

Washington conference I took a similar approach to the few repressive Pauline passages, which of course have been treated by traditionalists as if they were the entire message of God concerning women. I urged that we follow Paul's frequent transcendence of his socialization rather than absolutizing the record of his struggles with it. I pointed out that just as recognition of David's hatred of his enemies in the imprecatory Psalms does not impugn our faith in the inspiration of the Old Testament, recognition of the record of Paul's struggles with his rabbinic socialization does not impugn our faith in the inspiration of the New Testament.

To nobody's surprise, traditionalists seized upon the "Jewett-Mollenkott view of Scripture" as a denial of scriptural inerrancy and therefore as heresy. Harold Lindsell, editor of *Christianity Today*, withholds the term evangelical from all persons who do not affirm inerrancy in exactly his own fashion, and thus excommunicates people like Jewett from the evangelical fold. Taking a more moderate position, Carl F. H. Henry regrets the divisiveness of Lindsell's book *Battle for the Bible*, notes that scriptural documentation is "conspicuously absent" in Lindsell's book, and deplores its coupling of "dire warnings with strange contradictions and evangelistic over-statements."⁵ One of the most scholarly of evangelical theologians, F. F. Bruce, recommends *Man as Male and Female* especially for its exegesis of the Pauline passages relating to women. In the *Evangelical Quarterly*, Professor Bruce commented that "Dr. Jewett interprets Paul with the respect which his apostolic authority requires, but in doing so he vindicates Paul's title to be acknowledged as the patron saint not only of Christian liberty in general but specifically of women's liberty."⁶

Even in the radical evangelical camp, where devotion to social justice is considered basic to Christian discipleship, Jewett's book has been a watershed. Although radical evangelical publications like *Right-On* (now called *Radix*) are ordinarily feminist, *Right-On* attacked Jewett as "being content to interpret Paul in the most chauvinist way possible and then quickly to disregard what he said." And John Alexander accused Jewett of simply rejecting any biblical passage about women with which he happens to disagree. But Alexander, who is the editor of *The Other Side: A Magazine of Christian Discipleship*, later devoted a whole issue of his journal to the question of scriptural inerrancy and authority, featuring feminist thinkers such as Letha Scanzoni, Donald Dayton, Paul Jewett, and myself. Alexander's willingness to open himself to honest inquiry is representative of a new and hopeful development in evangelical circles.

Hermeneutical Issues

Traditionalist evangelicals are fond of saying that feminists are forced into a relativizing hermeneutic dodging the Bible's absolutely obvious surface meanings because a more truly evangelical hermeneutic would uphold sexual hierarchy. But the more study I devote to this issue, the more convinced I become that traditionalists themselves utilize a relativizing hermeneutic in an underground fashion. I am willing to admit that Scripture sometimes records the struggles of a human being in process, or sometimes records historical situations that do not represent God's ideal for all places and times. But traditionalist evangelicals uphold hierarchy by simply *ignoring* those passages that do not support their presuppositions. An example would be Elisabeth Leitch's assertion that "Mutual submission (God

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sion (God

knew when He set up His hierarchy) will not work." When I wrote to the editors of the *Cambridge Fish* pointing out that Leitch had swept under the rug literally dozens of New Testament passages that teach mutual submission, the editors commissioned two authors to respond in print. The responses took two major tacks: first, that I had misinterpreted Leitch, who was not referring to general Christian relationships covered in passages like Rom. 12:10 or Eph. 5:21 but only to marriage; and second, that marital relationships are a special subdivision of Christian mutual submission, in which Christian mutuality entails female submission to male authority. Although I appreciated the *Fish's* discussing passages they had previously ignored, perhaps my mind is not subtle enough to grasp in what sense the submission is *mutual* when the wife must of necessity defer to the greater authority of her husband. And I have yet to comprehend why marital intimacy should call for more rigid rules and categories than general Christian relationships call for. It seems to me that such traditionalists are turning exegetical handspings in order to evade the egalitarian thrust of passages like 1 Pet. 5:5: "all of you be subject to one another."

Over a year ago in *The Reformed Journal*⁷, I issued a challenge to traditionalist evangelical theologians to assume the burden of proof if they continue to deny to church women those privileges and responsibilities that were enjoyed in some of the first-century churches and for which we are even more highly qualified today. In particular, I asked that, since evangelical traditionalists base their anti-feminism on the Bible, they explain the following hermeneutical difficulties to me. First, if specific comments about women in local first-century congregations were intended to become God's norm for all places and times, why was the New Testament permitted to give varying advice on the subject? By traditionalist interpretations, 1 Cor. 11 stipulates that women must cover their heads when they pray aloud or preach; 1 Cor. 14 says that women are not to preach or pray aloud at all; and 1 Timothy flatly forbids women to teach or tell men what to do. I asked traditionalists to identify which of these passages is the absolute norm to which they adhere, and on what basis they have decided to follow one of these passages rather than another. To date, nobody has replied.

I also asked traditionalists to explain how they harmonize Gen. 1 with Gen. 2 and 1 Cor. 11:3-7. Since they take as normative Paul's rabbinical assumption that Eve's creation after Adam shows Eve's subordination to Adam, they are left in a difficult position concerning Gen. 1:26-28, which says that Adam and Eve were created together on the sixth day, both of them in the image of God, and both of them responsible for the rest of the created world. Do the traditionalists believe literally that Adam was created first, then all the vegetation and animals, and finally Eve? Or do they accept the order of creation as described in Gen. 1?

Discrepancies in the plots of Gen. 1 and Gen. 2 present no problem for me, since I believe Gen. 2 is an account emphasizing *relationship* and utilizing the ring technique, in which the importance of a subject is highlighted by placing it in the most emphatic positions, the first and final positions. As I interpret Gen. 1 and 2, humanity is the masterpiece of the creation. Gen. 1, which is concerned with chronology, makes that point by use of climactic order. Gen. 2 makes the same point by listing the creation of humanity in the first (Adam) and final (Eve) positions. Since the name Adam clearly includes Eve according to Gen. 5:2, it is obvious that Gen. 2 is not concerned with the chronological order of creation but rather with defining relationships. For chronology of creation, Gen. 1

clearly provides the norm because of its careful delineation of days. Gen. 2 announces its concern with relationship rather than chronology by emphasizing God's personal fashioning of Adam and Eve, God's observation that man should not be alone, Adam's instant recognition of Eve as different from the animals and identified with himself, and the author's recognition of "one fleshedness." But Gen. 1 and 2 *concur* in making humankind the zenith of creation.

The plot differences in Gen. 1 and 2 present a serious problem for those who hold to an absolutely inerrant view of Scripture and argue that women must be subordinate to men *because of the Gen. 2 order of creation*. According to their own definitions (not mine), either traditionalists must admit that Paul's arguments are erroneous or that Gen. 1 is erroneous. Either way, their hermeneutic is relativized and their view of inerrancy is demolished. I pressed this point in correspondence with Harold Lindsell; he has simply failed to respond to my letter. I pressed the same point in debate with a theologian, George Knight III, and a pastor, Tom Stark, at Western Theological Seminary; neither would give me an answer. One traditionalist simply sneered, "you're trying to pin me down, aren't you?!" When I replied that I thought such questions deserved to be taken seriously, he changed the subject.

I have asked traditionalists why, in I Cor. 14:34, Paul based his argument for female silence on the law, whereas in Gal. 3:17-19 he said that the law was a temporary measure, fulfilled and superceded by Christ. I asked why I Tim. 2:14 imposed silence on women because of Eve, whereas Paul taught in II Cor. 5:17 and Gal. 3:29 that in Christ women as well as men become "New Creatures" and "Abraham's seed." I want to know whether traditionalist evangelicals believe that Christian women are no longer identified with Eve, but with Christ. If traditionalists *do* believe that II Cor. 5:17 and Gal. 3:29 apply to women as well as men, how can they continue to deny first-class citizenship to women on the basis of I Timothy's identification of Christian women with Eve? Which passage are we to take literally? And on what basis do we choose? And if women do *not* become new creatures in Christ, why do traditionalists bother to preach the gospel to women?

To explain the conflict between II Cor. 5:17 and I Tim. 2:14 (in context) within the boundaries of a literal view of inerrancy would be impossible. Such an attempt would force traditionalists to confront their own relativizing hermeneutic. Not surprisingly, nobody has made the attempt.

I have also asked traditionalists to explain how gender operates in I Cor. 12, where we are told that spiritual gifts are distributed by God's Spirit. We are told that Christian believers form one body with many members and many gifts, and that regardless of Jewishness or Gentileness, freedom or slavery, we are one in Christ. Do converted women become members of the body of Christ? If so, and a woman is gifted to be a minister, priest, or church leader, by what authority does the male establishment tell her she may not exercise her gift? One evangelical preacher to whom I addressed this question said that I Cor. 12:11 indicates that the gifts were given only to "every man," meaning to "every male." I then asked him whether converted women are excluded, on the basis of sex, from becoming the members of Christ's body. He declined to answer. When I asked him the meaning of Gal. 3:28, although he frequently claimed to be teaching "the whole counsel of God," he said he didn't have the slightest idea what the passage could possibly mean. Since his tone indicated that he didn't

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really *care* either, it is difficult for me to maintain conviction of his sincerity about scriptural inspiration and inerrancy.

I have asked traditionalists many other questions, but will mention only one more. If women were intended to remain forever subordinate in the church and home, why did J1. 2:28-29 speak of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on women as well as on men, and why did Peter at Pentecost claim that Joel's prophecy had that day been fulfilled (Acts 2:17-18)? What does Peter's remark mean? What does Gal. 3:28 mean to those who deny male-female equality in the body of Christ? How can people become truly *one* (all of them clothed in Christhood) and yet remain *unequal*? There are evangelical churches that deny women the right to preach yet claim to believe that Acts 2:17-18 and Gal. 3:28 are part of an inerrant and inspired Scripture. There are other evangelicals who make the same claim about Scripture and will allow women to preach, yet refuse to ordain women or to allow women to become top church administrators, regardless of how much the Spirit has been poured out upon the women in question. How do traditionalists explain such discrepancies? No one will tell me.

In the absence of traditionalists who will seriously answer the serious questions being posed by feminists, I can only conclude that traditionalists do not realize they are involved in an inconsistent selectivity so extreme that it amounts to dishonest scholarship. The other possibility is that they realize well enough, but are using the Bible to rationalize a position they cling to for political and personal reasons.

Radical evangelical publications such as *Sojourners*, *Vanguard*, *Inside*, *The Wittenburg Door*, and *The Other Side* encourage open discussion of biblical feminism within their pages. All of them have some readers who insist strenuously that there is no way Paul's struggles with his socialization can be reflected in the divinely inspired Word of God. For the most part these readers speak not out of the traditionalist mentality but out of the conviction that when all the facts are known, we will find that Paul can be interpreted *throughout* as consistently supporting human justice and equality in Christ. Some evangelical scholars, including Nancy Hardesty and Penelope Tyndale, believe that the evidence is already available, that scholarly egalitarian exegesis of every single passage concerning women has already been done, and that the task now is simply to raise consciousness concerning the Bible's real message for women.

Unity and Equality

My own position is that the *vast preponderance* of biblical evidence points toward an ideal of human unity and egalitarian harmony in the body of Christ. In the very few cases where that predominant theme is undercut, I suspect human interference within the human instrument by which the divine book was given to us. I do not think the Bible is in error to record the struggles and thought-processes of certain individuals, nor do I think the Bible is in error to record various societal practices that do not necessarily represent God's ideal for all places and times. In Mt. 19:4-8, Jesus interpreted Dt. 24:1-4 as a concession to human hardness, revealing it as such by reference to Gen. 1:27 and 5:2. Christ's practice provides a model for our own handling of canonical Scripture. If we do not interpret the Bible contextually, if we refuse to study individual passages in the light of other relevant scriptures, the error

is ours, not the Bible's. I have developed this position at length in my new book, *Women, Men, and the Bible*.⁸

Even within the radical evangelical publications, sexism seems lower on the list of priorities than other forms of oppression. For instance, in an insightful article called "The Honky Hermeneutic," a black evangelical pastor, Clarence Hilliard, explains how the strategies of dichotomizing, spiritualizing, and developing blind spots "operate to foster insensitivity among believers to the needs of the poor, powerless, and oppressed and how they served the oppressive interests of the status quo."⁹ But Hilliard applies his insights only to racism and economic elitism--no mention of sexism. In secular movements for human liberation, there has been a curious inability to perceive the oppression of women as undergirding other forms of oppression. Although in recent years sexism has not caused as much obvious physical suffering as racism or imperialism, it is futile to deal with public societal problems while still allowing subjugation in the home. As long as children grow up taking the subordination of their mothers for granted, they will be relatively insensitive to the injustice of subordinating persons of other races and nationalities to the wishes of the more powerful. Radical Christians, like secular radicals, seem slow to awaken to the fact that sexism is the most subtle and most pervasive form of human oppression, a core expression of human alienation from God and God's creatures that must be cured before other forms of alienation can be dealt with adequately.

I was tremendously encouraged by the recent appearance of Jim Wallis' book, *Agenda for Biblical People*, which gives full recognition to sexism along with other perversions of God's intentions for humanity. I cannot register strong-enough agreement with Wallis' fine distinction between slavery and the Christian ideal of servanthood: "The slavery that is imposed upon the poor, women, blacks, and other oppressed minorities by the social and economic circumstances of their lives must never be confused with servanthood. To counsel the oppressed into passivity is a brutal distortion of the example of Christ's servanthood and ignores the central truth that freedom is the basis of servanthood. Christians must be those who are free before God to serve, who refuse to struggle for themselves, but rather struggle to *empower* others who have no freedom."¹⁰

Evangelicals: Radical and Traditional

As I see it, the thinkers in contemporary evangelicalism are split into two basic groups. On the one hand, radical evangelicals are committed to social justice but differ in the degree to which they will recognize a human element in the divinely-inspired Bible. On the other hand, traditionalists hold to an uncritical view of inerrancy that seems useful in bolstering their highly conservative political stance and their oppressive social attitudes. (For instance, a cartoon in a traditionalist evangelical publication made fun of women's liberation, African liberation, children's rights, androgynous God-language, and the recycling of paper).¹¹

Never has the idea of female subordination in church and home received more thorough articulation in the evangelical press and pulpit than in the recent past. But I take hope from the strength of this backlash against women's liber-

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ation. I remember, for instance, that the doctrine of the divine right of kings was thoroughly articulated and finely honed in the earlier seventeenth century, just as absolute monarchy was in its death throes. I am hoping that the strength of the anti-feminist backlash similarly indicates that male supremacy is in its death throes, and that male-female mutuality is "a-borning."

Last fall I was amused to see that a *Christianity Today* interview with Marabel Morgan, author of *The Total Woman*, was presented under the title of "Preferring One Another."¹² Morgan claims that Rom. 12:10, articulating the principle of mutuality, is the whole essence of her "Total Woman" philosophy! Yet she indicates that men have the right to combine a career and a family and by no means must be expected to put their families first, whereas women must place family responsibilities first unless they decide to remain single. It seems evident that this is not the kind of mutuality that Rom. 12 speaks about, since the woman's "preference" for her husband carries a huge practical price tag, while the husband's "preference" for his wife seems to entail nothing but sentiment. Nevertheless, I am encouraged that Morgan is giving lip service to a biblical concept she does not yet fully understand. Even that kind of lip service indicates, I hope, that evangelical feminism is gaining ground.

1 *Cambridge Fish*, Winter 1975-76, p. 6.

2 Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1974.

3 Eugene C. Bianchi and Rosemary R. Ruether, *From Machismo to Mutuality: Essays on Sexism and Woman-Man Liberation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), p. 14.

4 Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, p. 119.

5 *The New Review of Books and Religion*, September 1976, p. 7.

6 As quoted by *The Reformed Journal*, July-August 1976, p. 26. The quotations from *Right-On* and John Alexander are also cited in this issue.

7 "Church Women, Theologians, and the Burden of Proof," *The Reformed Journal*, July-August 1975, and September 1975.

8 Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977. A cassette study kit is also available.

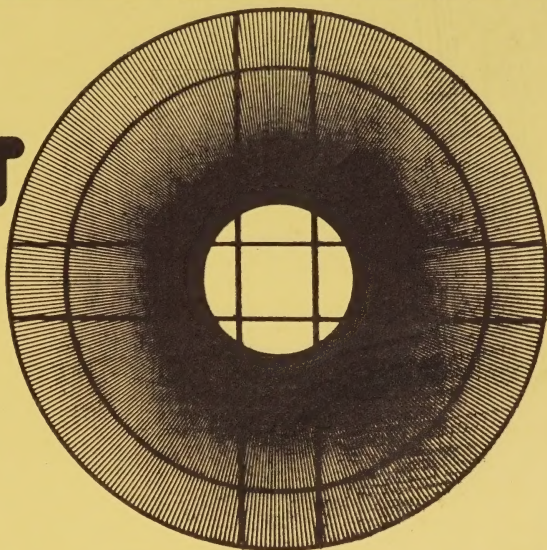
9 *The Other Side*, May-June 1976, p. 66.

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12 September 10, 1976, pp. 12-15.

FEMINIST VIEWS OF CHRISTIANITY



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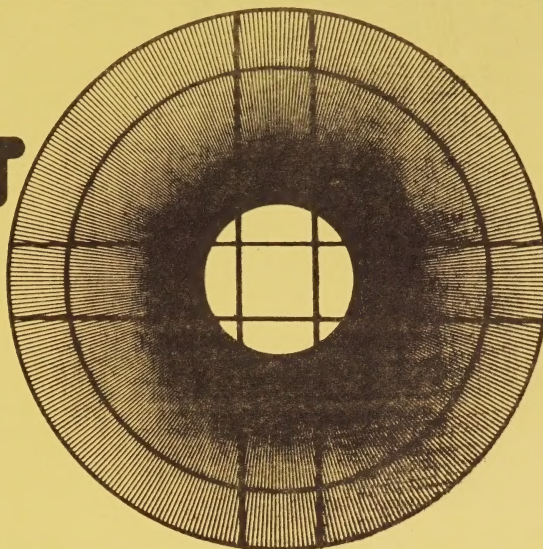
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Bishop Belden will ordain woman priest

By RICHARD C. DUJARDIN
Journal-Bulletin Religion Writer

The first ordination of a woman priest by the Right Rev. Frederick H. Belden, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island, will take place this Sunday at St. Peter's Church in Glenside, Pa.



DRAKE

The Rev. Jo-Anne Drake, 29, a native Rhode Islander who was elevated to the deaconate by Bishop Belden in ceremonies at the Cathedral of St. John in Providence in August, 1977, has been ministering as an assistant in the Philadelphia suburb for the last year.

In a telephone interview from New Jersey, Miss Drake said she feels "terribly excited" about the prospect of her ordination. "I feel very good about being in St. Peter's Church, very good about being part of the Episcopal Church, and about my ordination."

BISHOP BELDEN said he is presiding over the ordination because Miss Drake is still technically under his jurisdiction. A standing committee of the Rhode Island diocese endorsed her ordination after an interview last spring. He said he will preside over the 7:30 p.m. ceremony before continuing on to attend the House of Bish-

ops meeting in Kansas City next week.

Though the ordination of women priests has been a heated topic of controversy since the Episcopal Church convention approved women's ordinations in September, 1976, the bishop said he does not believe that there will be any repercussions here.

THE REV. HENRY TURNBULL, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Newport, an outspoken opponent of women's ordination, said yesterday he was "disappointed" by the prospective ordination. But he said that although "I've had parishioners say to me that if the bishop ordained a woman he would no longer be welcome at St. John's, that's not my position. He's going to visit us Nov. 12, and as far as I'm concerned, he's still invited."

Miss Drake, who has a B.A. degree from Rhode Island College and a degree in business from Johnson and Wales, completed her studies for the priesthood at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. She is the daughter of Mrs. Edith A. Drake of 1 Beckett St., Johnston.

During the last year, she said, she has been involved in "all aspects" of ministry, with particular responsibility for education.

Miss Drake said she would offer this advice for women considering ordination to the priesthood: "If you really hear a call, give it all you have. Talk to other people about it. Try it, test it and seek it."

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DOG FOUND: Mixed breed, tan brown, white markings, very friendly! Centerville. Warwick. 878-1487.

DOG FOUND: Male, Lab Shepherd, mixed, black, 878-1487.

PAUL & WOMAN

A SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

SUMMARY ARTICLES

"Woman in the New Testament" by Robin Scroggs. In The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Supplementary vol., 1976, pp. 966-968.

Brief review of the status of women in the Gospels and the N.T. church.

"Some Unexplored Parallels to 1 Cor. 11, 11-12 and Gal. 3, 28: the N.T. on the Role of Women" by Madeleine Boucher. Catholic Biblical Quarterly 31 (1969), 50-58.

A brief summary of interpretations of the texts which raises the question of the relationship between contemporary theology and an authoritarian Bible.

DETAILED DISCUSSION

The Bible and the Role of Women by Krister Stendahl. Translated by Emilie T. Sander. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966 (Facet Books, Biblical Series, 15).

A case study in how one uses the Bible to speak to issues in the church today by the former Dean of Harvard Divinity School. The study was prompted by debates on the ordination of women in the Lutheran State Church of Sweden.

"Paul and the Eschatological Woman" by Robin Scroggs. Journal of the American Academy of Religion 40 (1972), 283-303.

An analysis of the relevant texts which concludes Paul is "the one clear voice in the NT asserting the freedom and equality of women in the eschatological community." See also his further remarks in "Paul and the Eschatological Woman: Revisited" in JAAR 42 (1974), 532-537; and Elaine H. Pagels "Paul and Women: A Response to Recent Discussion" in the same issue, pp. 538-549.

ADDITIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women by Richard and Joyce Boldrey. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976.

An exegetical study intended especially for those within evangelical christianity which argues the case for equality of the sexes in all spheres of life, including the church. Especially valuable annotated bibliography by Donald Dayton included on pp. 73-82.

Women, Men and the Bible by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. Nashville: Abingdon, 1977.

Suggests a number of concrete changes that need to be effected in the church if men and women are to grow equally into the "full measure of perfection in Christ." Written for a general audience. See critique on this and Boldrey by Melanie Morrison in Sojourners 7 (Jan. 1978), 29-34.

"The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament" by Constance R. Parvey. In Religion and Sexism edited by Rosemary R. Ruether. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974.

The author, a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, is a consultant for the Lutheran Church of America. She calls for overcoming the dualism inherent in accepting both a theology of equivalence in Christ and a practice of woman's subjection.

Biblical Affirmations of Woman by Leonard Swidler. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979.

A survey outlining the positive, ambivalent and negative attitudes toward women in the Hebrew-Jewish and christian traditions. Part three includes these attitudes in Paul and in the early church.

The Spirit and the Bride: Woman in the Bible by Karl Hermann Schukle. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1979.

Presents a comprehensive treatment of the current question of woman from a biblical and ecclesiastical viewpoint within the Roman Catholic tradition.

"The Subordination and Liberation of Women in Christian Theology: St. Paul and Sarah Grimké" by Rosemary Radford Ruether. Soundings 61 (1978), 168-181.

A contrast of two models of women's equality in Christ which relates nature, society and eschatology in different ways and comes up with different conclusions about the social implications of women's place in the new christian order.

Are Women People too? by E. David Cook. Bramcote, England: Grove Books, 1978.

A plea to reinterpret the feminist debate into how all people should relate properly as persons, and then apply this to male/female relationships. Outlines the Pauline texts and summarizes various interpretations and their conclusions.

Women in the Church by Dennis R. Kuhns. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1978.

A Menonite pastor's attempt "to move beyond some of the prejudices and barriers which have obstructed our understanding and prevented us from appreciating fully the new order which Christ came to initiate." A due consideration of the context of the Pauline texts facilitates this effort.

Woman Be Free! by Patricia Gundry. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977.

"When God moved Paul to write to the women of Corinth against speaking out in the meetings, was He telling women of all times that they could not open a meeting with a prayer or give announcements in their churches?" In recognizing that "problem passages" may have been responses to specific local difficulties, the author pleads for the underlying message of freedom that she sees as God's through Paul.

"Women in the Pre-Pauline and Pauline Churches" by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Union Seminary Quarterly Review 33 (1978), 153-166.

The author, Associate Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, sees the patriarchal models of early church history as the determinative influence on the post-Pauline church, rather than the egalitarian community structures of the first christian missionary movement. She calls for a reversal of this influence in our post-patriarchal age so that the word of God not become "a tool for the patriarchal oppression of women and a theological justification of sexist societal and ecclesial structures." Especially full bibliographical notes accompany the article.

WOMEN & RELIGION

A READING LIST

- ANTHOLOGIES** Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions. Rosemary Ruether, ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974.
Chronologically arranged group of essays demonstrate how women have been the victims of oppression through Jewish and Christian history.
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Selections from and introductions to male theologians discussing the female sex as well as women doing theology ranging from Augustine to Mary Daly.
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- Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds. New York: Harper and Row, 1979.
Overview of contemporary feminist thinking ranging from reformist approaches which recognize the patriarchy in the institutions while denying that patriarchy is religion to specifically feminist religions based on women's life experience.
- HISTORY** Not in God's Image: Women in History from the Greeks to the Victorians.
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From the Old Testament through the twentieth century, Tavard provides historical background for the attempt to discover elements for a renewed theology.
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In her controversial work, Douglas concludes that women and liberal clergy united together to take over and create a sentimental society which grew into what we today know as the mass consumer culture. She raises important questions of "feminine" values and their interface with the larger culture.
- OLD TESTAMENT AND JUDAISM** God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality. Phyllis Trible. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.
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An analysis of the historical, cultural and mythological reasons why women are relegated to the status of second-class citizens in the Jewish faith.
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NEW
TESTAMENT
AND MARY
(CONT.)

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Two evangelical feminists, believing that the liberation of women is an integral part of the Christian message, look at transcending stereotypes and choices.

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THEOLOGY

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Biblical theology is liberation theology. Feminist theology is to make the biblical message clear by use of both female and male pronouns and imagery and by development of the individual in "partnership" with God and each other.

Liberation Theology: Human Hope Confronts Christian History and American Power. New York: Paulist Press, 1972. New Woman/New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation. New York: Seabury Press, 1975. Rosemary Ruether.

The ideological roots of oppression lie in the alienated dualistic worldview inherited by Christianity from the ancient world. The negative sides of the dualisms were projected onto women and other groups. The key to liberation lies in women articulating a holistic, life-affirming ethic and theology.

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These three works provide a vivid description of Daly's journey from liberal Christianity to radical feminism. For her, the core symbols of Christianity, because of their overwhelming maleness in gender and attributes, make Christianity impossible of reform. Feminism, understanding that, is the bearer of messianic consciousness. Very important critiques of Christianity and culture.

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Sandra H. Boyd
Episcopal Divinity School
Weston School of Theology Libraries
November 1979

The Religious Experience Of American Women

A SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Colonial** The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth Century New England. Edmund Morgan. rev. ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.
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The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1760-1835. Nancy R. Cott. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.
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Theologians back startling claim—

GOD IS A WOMAN

GOD may be a woman, after all, many biblical scholars admit.

"Modern feminists have been insisting that God is not necessarily a man; He could be a She. And they could be right," said Dr. Phillip J. Boyer, a former professor of theology at Southern Illinois University.

The Methodist minister, now living in Miami, Florida, told GLOBE: "The notion that God is female is not a new concept at all. Many ancient cultures considered God a female.

"In fact, the early Christian sect known as the Gnostics considered one of the three aspects of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit, to be feminine.

"One of the most popular gods of the Middle East, including the area eventually settled by the ancient Hebrews under the leadership of Joshua, was a goddess named Astarte. She was as powerful as the Hebrews' Jehovah," Dr. Boyer added.

His views are backed by Elaine Pagels, a professor of religion at Barnard College in New York City, and author of the book, *The Gnostic Gospels* (Random House).

Boyer added: "The idea died out with the Gnostics, but there is strong evidence

By **BOB BORINO**

that a larger number of early Christians also considered the Holy Spirit to be a female."

However their beliefs were eradicated as church leaders edited the gospels and other writings to conform with the notion of a masculine God, he said.

"What else would you expect them to do?" Boyer asked. Although women played a leading role in the early church's history, men gradually took complete charge and rewrote much of the Christian literature to suit themselves."

Many ancient and current religions also see God as both male and female, according to Ninian Smart, a professor of religious studies at the University of California in Santa Barbara.

"There is Shiva (the Hindu god of destruction and reproduction) and Shakti (wife and counterpart to Shiva) who are considered a single god with conflicting aspects," he told GLOBE.

"The Christian Trinity itself seems to have similar aspects as Shiva and Shakti.

Walter H. Capps, also a religious studies professor at the University of California, said woman may not only be central to Christian thought

but may also be responsible for its origin.

"The female deity, meaning *theotokos* or mother of God, need not be identified simply as the mother of Christ, but also as mother of the Trinity," said Capps.

Boyer added: "The idea here is that if Mary is to be considered the mother of Christ, who is one inseparable aspect of the Trinity, she must also be the mother of the Father and of the Holy Spirit as well.

"This, of course, is a wild and scandalous thought. No theologian would seriously propose that the Trinity could have a mother, but, when we are dealing with something beyond our understanding, anything is possible.

"Actually, more and more modern theologians are coming to view God as neither male nor female. The traditional Jewish and Christian view is that God is unknowable and that any human view of that three-part deity is limited by our human ignorance and therefore invalid."

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Does the spirit matter for feminists?

Traveling around the country, gathering material and impressions first-hand from feminists, has been an integral source of information for *The New Woman's Survival Catalog* and its successor, *The New Woman's Survival Sourcebook*. What struck us during our trip in the summer of 1973, and in fact, what launched the first catalog, was the proliferation of survival institutions and women's cultural alternatives: rape crisis centers and hotlines, self-defense schools, self-health clinics, skills centers as well as feminist art schools, galleries, film cooperatives, theater, and so on. This past summer of 1974 we observed a subtle but quite definite addition to these concerns, evident throughout the country—a widespread and surging interest in the spiritual aspects of life. Though this movement is most highly advanced in the West and on the West Coast, we found wherever there are feminist communities women are exploring psychic and non-material phenomena: reinterpreting astrology; creating and celebrating feminist rituals around birth, death, menstruation; reading the Tarot; studying pre-patriarchal forms of religion; reviving and exploring esoteric goddess-centered belief systems such as wicca; developing and cultivating dream-analysis, ESP, astral projection, precognition; learning psychic and homeopathic healing; rescuing the wholistic perspective of the right hemisphere of the brain from the contempt of left-brained linear-mindedness; practicing meditation and yoga; rewriting the *I Ching*; revolutionizing our food and natural resource consumption out of the consciousness of our connectedness with the rest of the biosphere.

When we encountered this trend on our first stops, our initial reaction was indifference bordering on uneasiness and apprehension, a common reaction among feminists who are intellectually oriented or who are political activists. Later, when we looked back at our earlier impressions, it was clear that this reaction stemmed from two sources. First, there is the conditioning in Western culture to view with scepticism, suspicion, and ridicule anything which cannot be "scientifically" validated. We are programmed to view "irrational" phenomena such as precognition or psychic healing as kooky, indulged in only by charlatans and/or weirdos—a very effective deterrent to keep us from messing in these areas. The second, more obvious source of our association of things spiritual with reactionary politics. Identifying spirituality with nationalism, people as diverse as Angela Davis and Harriet Van Horne see the dawn of the Aquarius as the potential dawning of feminism. Or, "spiritual" is taken as synonymous with "religious" which in turn signifies isolation, solipsism, retreat. In these days of long and other short-cuts to inner peace and psychic awareness, we have the terrifying spectacle of young, energetic, and talented feminists like Sally Kempton going the Arica route and ending up at the feet of Baba Mukunda. Sally has "transcended" feminism. By the time we reached Tucson it was clear that something of major significance was afoot; feminists were on to something. We traveled up the West Coast, through



"Wise Women" poster, 24"x24", full color. From: The Chicago Women's Graphics Collective, 3100 North Southport Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60657. \$2.00 each, plus .25 postage.

the mountain states, and back across the Midwest, it became increasingly obvious that what appear to be disparate interests are in fact aspects of one phenomenon. Women, feminists, are becoming sensitized and receptive to the psychic potential inherent in human nature—and we are realizing that women in particular are the repository of powers and capabilities that have been suppressed, that have been casualties of western man's drive to technological control over nature. Feminists have begun to recognize an even deeper source of female alienation and fragmentation than the sex-role polarization which has so effectively limited women's lives—the mind/body dualism progressively fostered by patriarchal culture. In acknowledging this side of our being, women are in effect striving for a total integration and wholeness. Accepting the wholeness that includes psychic awareness and exploration takes feminist consciousness into an entirely new dimension; it amounts to a redefinition of reality.

As we listened to women telling about their discoveries, explorations, experiences of the non-material dimension in their lives, our conviction grew that this trend among feminists is not reactionary, not authoritarian, not mystical, not solipsistic. Rather, the effect we observed was that this reaching out for a broader conception of our natural powers, a larger vision of wholeness, is ener-

gizing, restorative, regenerative. There are abuses—some mindless anthropomorphizing of goddess worship, here and there crude fatalism ("I can't participate, the Tarot says not to," or "Don't blame me for screwing up—how do you expect me, a Pisces, to work with an air sign!") But the overall impression was one of strength and self-confidence, a closer sense of community among women, and excitement at discovering an added tool to neutralize and combat the destructive energies of patriarchy, a feeling that we are only beginning to fulfill our potential as we tap into the sources of our real power. And, quite contrary to the distasteful authoritarianism that seems such an integral facet of male-dominated spiritual forms—from the Catholic Church to the Divine Light Mission—feminist spiritual explorations are marvelously anarchic, chaotic, or even hydra-like in their manifestations. No correct line or correct leader here!

Paradoxically, this new spiritual inquiry is challenging and further breaking down patriarchal authority—the authority of both patriarchal science and religion. At the same time, this broadening of our vision of reality cannot help but have a formative and creative impact on the development of our female culture—as inspiration and material for our art, music, literature, aesthetics, and by adding a profound new dimension to our relations with one another.

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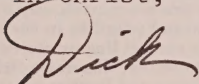
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"In the opinion of feminists, the alienation between man and woman is the primordial one from which all other false or unjust relationships derive!"

Throughout history--so textual critics and anthropologists agree--societies have elevated certain of their social infrastructures to the realm of belief; and such belief systems in turn have become the justification for the continuation of the social structures from which they sprang. As sophisticated Christians, I think we all realize that Christianity, though revelatory, has not been without its cultural taint.

What has been dismayng church women of late is the failure of male theologians even today to distinguish between the essence of the faith and some of its most blatant cultural accretions. Just as the theory of the divine right of kings is served to legitimize a feudal system which kept a vast majority of the people in subjection and poverty, so the system of male-oriented symbols, doctrines and taboos in the Judeo-Christian tradition has served to keep females in subjection to men and in spiritual, if not always physical, poverty.

Upsetting the Applecart

The women's liberation movement has awakened women theologians, seminary students and churchwomen to the need to rethink theology in radical terms. Starting with an analysis of the patriarchal society out of which Judaism and, later, Christianity developed, these women are developing new models of Christian consciousness, based on an egalitarian ethic of liberation, and are attempting to replace outmoded symbols with fresh, dynamic, more humane symbols which give meaning and vision to the experiences of all people. They are not attempting to appropriate male religious symbols for themselves, but to right an imbalance in the system which has shaped religious consciousness since the time of the patriarchs. But in order to right this imbalance they must first upset the applecart; which is to say that the feminist theologians are not reformers but revolutionaries, who attack even the theology of hope as being tied to old patriarchal symbols.

Who are these new feminist theologians and what are they saying about Christianity? Surprisingly enough, the vanguard of this movement is to be found in the Roman Catholic Church. Three of today's prominent women theologians are Catholics--Mary Daly, Rosemary Reuther and Elizabeth Farians. (The man who has made the most important background contribution to this movement is also a Catholic--Leonard Swidler of Temple University, who in his article "Jesus Was a Feminist," in the January 1971 Catholic World, argues convincingly that Jesus himself was one of the "new" feminist theologians.) Protestant women theologians--notably Letty Russell, Peggy Way and Nelle Morton--have also picked up the gauntlet and are busy exploring these new avenues and adding to the growing body of literature on the subject.

The feminist theologians see in the religion of the Scriptures as it has been transmitted by the church a reflection of the male experience of the world. In both Old and New Testament times women were regarded as an inferior species to be owned like cattle, as unclean creatures incapable of participating in the mysteries of the worship of Yahweh. For whatever historical reason--perhaps out of violent reaction to the excesses of the more female-oriented Canaanite fertility cults--ancient Hebrew society was blatantly misogynist and male dominated. No wonder that in such a society God became male--"King," "Father," "Lord," "Master." "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him." Or was it the other way around?

Of course, sophisticated thinkers have never identified God with an elderly male parent in heaven. We like to think we are beyond such anthropomorphism. But what happens to us when we change the words around? God created woman in her own image, in the image of God she created her. As linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf has observed:



"The limits of my language are the limits of my thought." Theological language was fixed in the era of the early patriarchy and has never shaken itself loose, in spite of our changing conceptions of reality. Images, solidified in language, have a way of surviving in the imagination so that a person can function on two different and often contradictory levels. One can speak of the abstract conceptualization of God as spirit and still imagine "him" as male.

Paul, Aquinas and Luther

When God was identified as male, a hierarchy of values was established. Since man was made in God's image and God was male, females were excluded from participation in that image. We may express what happened in an equation: Man is to God as woman is to not God. Paul puts it plainly in I Corinthians: "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not made from woman, but woman from man." Since all that was not God was sinful, woman became identified with sin; and this identification was reinforced by the myth of Adam and Eve.

With the incorporation of Hellenistic dualism into Christian theology, a further dimension was added to the growing alienation of man from woman and of woman from God in the Christian imagination. Hellenism brought with it an identification of sin with the body. And since in Hebrew culture woman was already identified (because of child-bearing and menstruation) with unclean bodily functions, it was but a natural extension to identify her with this new dimension of sin. Thus woman became the temptress, the devouring Earth Mother, the witch whose very existence threatened the spirituality of theocratic man. The patristic commentators on Genesis interpret the Fall as a succumbing to bodiliness, to femaleness, to sexuality. It is no historical accident that Ann Hutchinson, who dared to counsel self-determination for women in spiritual matters, was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a witch.

The effect of elevating patriarchal structures to the realm of belief was to put those beliefs in the service of the hierarchical, inegalitarian infrastructures of the society. Thus St. Paul could counsel women to be quiet in church and to obey their husbands because this was ordained by God, this was the nature of creation (Eph. 5:24; I Cor. 11:3). Despite his insight that we are all one in Christ Jesus, Paul was very much a man of his times.

So was Thomas Aquinas, who declared in the Summa Theologica: "Woman was made to be a help to man. But she was not fitted to be a help to man except in generation, because another man would prove a more effective help in anything else." The Roman Church's veneration of Mary as virgin and mother can be seen as an attempt to make sense out of a theological system which had become alienated from existential reality. To reconcile the fact of and the necessity for procreation with a theology which declared that everything having to do with the body---therefore sexual/procreative activity---was unclean and evil, the church simply asserted that God incarnate was not conceived in a "natural" way and sentimentalized the role of Mother so that it no longer needed to be tied to natural bodily functions.

Centuries after Aquinas, Martin Luther held to the old patriarchal view. His "priesthood of all believers" challenged the hierarchy of the Roman church, but he did nothing to reform the hierarchical relationship between men and women. Indeed he declared: "Women are on earth to bear children. If they die in child-bearing, it matters not; that is all they are here to do." Even in our own day a theologian of the stature of Karl Barth holds to the same revelatory religion which has always excluded the existential experience of women. "Women," he wrote, "are ontologically inferior to men."

As Rosemary Reuther points out, modern psychoanalysis sees such theological formulations as the result of an alienation within the human psyche, as projections onto another of the fear in one's own unconscious. Man, fearing his own sexuality, passivity and emotionality, projects them onto woman, thus doing away with the need to

deal with that part of his nature. (Just so white society projected similar attributes onto the black population it held inferior.)

The results of such psychic alienation are widely visible today. Thus the Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches refuse to ordain women; the Protestant churches fail to take women's intellectual and moral gifts seriously; many congregations insist that female ministers would be sexually distracting or would lack the image the ministry needs if it is to be an effective interpreter for God. But perhaps the worst result is the internalization by many women of their own inferiority to men. This limits their life options and their potential, so that they can see themselves as baking cakes for the women's society but not as head of the board of trustees or the council on ministries.

Jesus and Women

Having torn down the symbols which have kept them oppressed, what would the feminist theologians substitute?

The first step is to go back to the roots of the faith to see what is meaningful in them once they are shorn of their cultural outgrowths. One of the most important contributions to this stage of inquiry has been the re-examination of Jesus' life in terms of his relationships with people. In the Gospels Jesus appears as a man at odds with his time and culture--so much at odds that even his disciples (and much less his later followers) did not often understand what he was doing.

In the article cited above, Leonard Swidler offers evidence that, flouting the social and religious mores of his time which kept women strictly cloistered and in bondage to their husbands, Jesus went out of his way to treat women (and the other pariahs of his time) as complete human beings, equal to men and capable of being spokeswomen for God. In view of the fact that the Gospels must be seen through the lens of first century Christian communities which, obviously, shared the antiwoman culture then prevailing, it is all the more extraordinary that the Gospels reveal no negative attitude toward women on the part of Jesus. As Dorothy Sayers has so beautifully said it: "There is no act, no sermon, no parable in the Whole Gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess from the words and deeds of Jesus that there was anything "funny" about woman's nature."

Seen in this light, Jesus' life and its meaning take on new dimensions and bring us to a clearer understanding of Paul's truly prophetic passage: "...There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28) Though but fleetingly, Paul saw that the Hebrew laws regarding the ordering of persons--among them laws which stipulated that women were ritually unclean, that they could not be seen or talked with in public, that in adultery they were more guilty than their male partners, and that they were the property of their husbands--were all made irrelevant by Jesus and were ignored by him in his relationships with people. It is a sad commentary on the history of Christian thought that scarcely a single theologian, beginning with Paul, picked up this unique aspect of Jesus' ministry.

Here is Karl Barth, acknowledging (in his Church Dogmatics) not Jesus but Paul as his mentor and basing his contentions about God's will for men and women on Paul's culturally biased views:

The command of God will always point man to his position and woman to hers. In every situation, in face of every task and in every conversation, their functions and possibilities when they are obedient to the command, will be distinctive and diverse and will never be interchangeable....Why should not woman be the second in sequence, but only in sequence? What other choice has she, seeing she can be nothing at all apart from this sequence and her place in it?

The feminist theologian is bound to ask Barth: Who decreed the ordering of creation into superior and subordinate, into first and second? Was it laid down by divine fiat, or by a male theologian so blinded by cultural stereotypes (which were even more blatant in the German Swiss milieu he grew up in) that he couldn't see that Jesus' relationships with people led in the opposite direction?

A Pluralistic Schema

Feminist theology, then, rejects the tradition of hierarchical orders of creation in favor of an egalitarian, pluralistic schema. It finds its corroboration in the life and ministry of Jesus, who repudiated such elitist practices and attitudes and called all people--men and women, beggars and merchants, tax collectors and poor widows--to be true to the God within them. Feminist theology rejects the Adamic myth as bound to perpetuate the alienation of men and women from each other and from themselves. It prefers the priestly version of the creation story, which (in spite of some problems with language) emphasizes the androgynous nature of God's creation and the care which humans are to have for the earth and its creatures.

Feminist theology does not hypostasize sin as an event that happened or as something that people do. Rather, it defines sin as a basic alienation within the psyche--a failure to lay claim to that part of one's humanity that one then projects onto an "other." The male's failure to claim his own emotionality, his insecurities or creatureliness, his capacity for nurturance and his need to be creative, as well as the female's failure to recognize her own aggressiveness, power, competence and intellectuality are examples of such psychic alienation. Many feminists, not just theologians, contend that this phenomenon accounts for many social ills, including war. We project our individual or group fears onto an "other," a "not me"--be it females, an ethnic minority or "the enemy" we hear so much about from our government officials.

Just as man is alienated from himself and from woman, so Westerners, conditioned by the Judeo-Christian tradition, are alienated from that part of themselves which belongs to the earth. Our failure to see that we are intimately tied to the rivers, the air, the land we are polluting is another form of sin which is already becoming disastrous for all of God's creation.

Overindulging in Humble Pie

Sin, then, is not so much a falling away from God or a deliberate transgression of a divine being's orders as it is a failure to recognize the God within us and our fellow creatures. Feminists are therefore more likely to stress immanence rather than transcendence. They hold that sin is institutionalized wherever hierarchies are established; for hierarchies inescapably separate persons from one another or from part of themselves.

Because peoples have had different histories, sin takes different forms for different people. Herein feminists enter a crucial critique of traditional Christian ethics. Mary Daly states (in an article in the March 12, 1971 Commonweal) that "much of traditional Christian virtue appears to be the product of reactions on the part of men--perhaps guilty reactions--to the behavioral excesses of the stereotypic male." Christians have always been counseled to be meek, obedient, self-sacrificing and humble, to live a life of charity toward others, etc. This emphasis may have been necessary to counteract excessive aggressiveness, pride, and exploitative tendencies which characterize a male culture. The trouble was that these virtues were preached to women, for whom meekness, humility and self-sacrifice were already a way of life. Man's sin is that he has not had enough humility, woman's that she has had too much of it. It is as if, by letting women carry the burden of being humble and pious for them, men have got rid of any need to appropriate these virtues for themselves and so have felt free to visit aggression on the world. Here again, Jesus' relations with women are revealing. He did not speak to their weaknesses or coach them to eat humble pie. Remember, he said that Mary, Not Martha, had chosen the better part. Jesus spoke to the capacity of women for real faith and courage and for carrying out decisions.

It is in this understanding of sin and in the critique of Christian ethics that feminist theology converges with the growing theologies of other oppressed groups, such as black theology. If we, as affluent Christians, counsel an underdeveloped people or an exploited underclass to be patient, meek and forever self-sacrificing, we

commit the very sin we hope to avoid. Christ did not counsel the baggar to sell all he had, but he did so counsel the rich young ruler.

Many Christians have written at length about the "new man," the "new humanity," that Christ came to bring about. Few, however, have explained what it means to be "new." Feminists see the man-woman relationship as the key to the new humanity. The alienation between man and woman, they say, is the primordial one from which all other false or unjust relationships derive. Lest any accuse us of exaggerating the man-woman thing out of proportion, let them recall Gunnar Myrdal's discovery that when, 200 years ago, laws were needed to justify the enslavement of black Africans, the slaveholders took as their models the English laws of the time which restricted the rights of women. How can we hope to be for reconciliation with our black or poor brothers and sisters if we cannot achieve reconciliation with that other half of ourselves?

A Truly Liberating Partnership

For the feminists, salvation is that discovery and celebration of the "other" in ourselves. When men discover their femininity and women their masculinity, then perhaps we can form a truly liberating and mutually enriching partnership. And then perhaps we can discover our own "blackness" and "whiteness", our own poverty and affluence, which we have so long kept hidden from ourselves. The new humanity is a humanity which is becoming, impelled by a revelation that is not located in the distant past but is only now becoming manifest in the clamor for dignity and liberation on the part of underdeveloped peoples.

Feminist theology calls for a repudiation of the old male-oriented hierarchical symbol--God as Lord, King, Master and Almighty Father--in favor of something like Tillich's notion of the "ground and power of being" or Whitehead and Hartshorne's conception of a feeling, responding, relational God. Or if we must anthropomorphize, why not God as mother/father=="she" as well as "he?"

Mary Daly points out that religious symbols die when the cultural situation that supported them ceases to be acceptable. This is happening today with the emergence of the women's liberation movement and of Third World peoples. But his development, Daly says, should pose no problem to authentic faith, for such "accepts the relativity of all symbols and recognizes that fixation upon any one of them as absolute is idolatrous."

Feminist theology calls also for a rethinking of the traditional doctrines of sin, incarnation and salvation in the light of our new understanding of the Gospels and of our conviction that such doctrines must speak to and be consonant with the existential experience of all people, not just of white, Western males. And, finally, feminist theology calls for an ethic based on the responsible self-actualization of every person so that we may achieve deeper awareness of the ties that bind all of creation together.

Excepts from Liberation Theology, Rosemary Ruether, "Mother Earth and the Megamachine"
pp. 124-25

The liberation of women means..."combining the values of the world-transcending Yahweh with those of the world-renewing Ba'al in a post-technological religion of reconciliation with the body, the woman and the world, its salvation myth will not be one of divinization and flight from the body but of humanization and reconciliation with the earth.

"Our model is neither the romanticized primitive jungle nor the modern technological wasteland. Rather it expresses itself in a new command to learn to cultivate the garden, for the cultivation of the garden is where the powers of rational consciousness come together with the harmonies of nature in partnership.

